

### REMARKS

The applicants have carefully considered the Office action dated March 8, 2006 and the references it cites. By way of this Response, claims 21-28 have been amended. In view of the following, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are in condition for allowance and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Turning to the art rejections, the Office action rejected all of the previously pending claims as being anticipated by Kay et al., U.S. Patent 5,247,571. The applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Independent claim 21 recites a method comprising, among other things, performing a number identifier operation at a service switching point of a first carrier based on an originating number of a call without contacting a service control point; and, when the number identifier operation indicates the originating number belongs to a predetermined set of originating numbers, routing the call from the service switching point of the first carrier over a private line to a switch of an intermediate carrier. Kay et al. do not teach or suggest such a method.

While Kay et al. describe a system wherein a service control point (SCP) is accessed to determine call routing, Kay et al. do not teach or suggest a method wherein, without contacting an SCP, a service switching point (SSP) determines whether to route a call to an intermediate carrier switch over a private line or a line different from the private line based on whether a number identifier operation indicates an originating number belongs to a predetermined set. On the contrary, the routing instructions in Kay et al. are always provided from an SCP. (See, Col. 6, lines 15-21). Thus, Kay et al.

cannot fairly be said to teach or suggest the method of claim 21. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 21 and all claims depending therefrom are allowable over Kay et al.

Independent claim 28 is also patentable. Claim 28 recites a virtual private network comprising, among other things, an intermediate carrier switch routing a call between a first private virtual network and a second private virtual network, wherein, when a number identifier operation performed at a service switching point indicates an originating number of the call belongs to a set of originating numbers, the first private virtual network is coupled to the intermediate carrier switch over a private line, and, when the number identifier operation indicates the originating number does not belong to the set of originating numbers, the first private virtual network is coupled to the intermediate carrier switch over a public line. As discussed above, Kay et al. does not teach or suggest such a network. Accordingly, claim 28 and all claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

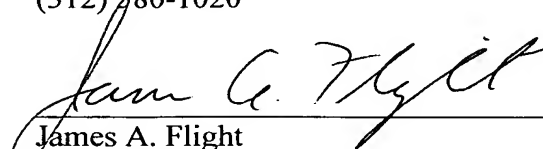
In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner is of the opinion that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number identified below.

Respectfully submitted,

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**July 13, 2006**